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ABSTRACT

Methods that are based on teaching children are not appropriate for teaching adults. As early as 1929, the education literature contained references to successful teachers of adults as those who deviated from "sound" pedagogical practices. The work of Malcolm Knowles solidified the field of adult education and established the term "andragogy" to refer to the most appropriate methods for teaching adults. The need for an andragogy-based approach to education is most critical in advanced levels of education for practicing professionals. However, most graduate-level programs do not meet practicing educators' needs because they are based on "preparation" rather than "practice." The National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders was established at Nova University in 1972 in an attempt to meet the needs of administrators who had already earned their Master's degrees and who held appropriate credentials for their positions. Classes were held at locations convenient to students' homes, and research requirements focused on solving problems faced by administrators in their own professional settings. After 18 years, the program thrives. Its graduates hold positions of prominence throughout the country. The program has survived and grown, despite criticism from colleagues in tradition-bound programs, because it recognizes in a fundamental, systematic way, that adults can learn best when andragogy, not pedagogy, drives the structure of the learning process. (KC)

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DESIGNING PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS - LET'S NOT OVERLOOK ANDRAGOGY

by

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Seated in a classroom are 20-30 students. The desks are arranged in lecture fashion, all in neat rows. In front of the classroom is a teacher who dominates the setting because she is the primary source of knowledge. Her teaching style requires one-way communication. Students depend on the teacher for direction and the knowledge that they will obtain. Knowledge acquired today is to be applied later.

In another room are 20-30 adults. The desks are clustered in groups of two, three, or four. These students are sharing information and ideas with each other. The individual performing the role of "teacher" is serving as a facilitator of learning. The facilitator stimulates thinking by citing theories that enable students to see relationships among phenomena, challenge untested assumptions, and develop questions that lead to insight. All of the "teaching" is focused on helping students learn, not on disseminating information. It is a type of learning that relates to a base of knowledge already within a student's grasp, but it challenges students to apply knowledge to current roles as practicing professionals.

Both scenarios are accurate descriptions of classrooms in most American universities. They differ, not only in the roles played by the "teacher", but also because of the instructional assumptions underlying each.

Adult Pedagogy - A Contradiction In Terms

From elementary through graduate school most of us obtain the majority of our formal education in settings similar to the first scenario. Increasingly, research indicates that the one-way communication, delayed knowledge application mode of instruction, is dysfunctional, particularly for adults.

> Most of what is known about learning has been derived from studies of learning in children and animals. Most of what is known about teaching has been derived from experiences with teaching children under conditions of compulsory attendance. And most theories about the learning/teaching transaction are based on the definition of education as a process of transmitting the culture. From these theories and assumptions there has emerged the technology of "Pedagogy"--a term derived from the Greek stem paid (meaning "child") and agogos (meaning "learning"). So "Pedagogy" means, specifically, the art and science of teaching children (Knowles, 1970, p. 19).

As early as 1929, the literature contained references to successful teachers of adults as those who deviated from "sound" pedagogical practices. "Frequently the authors of these articles expressed a

sense of guilt for violating academic standards (such as substituting interviews for quizzes). Obviously, they were feeling guilty because they had no theory to support their practices, they were simply being pragmatic and following their intuitions" (Knowles, 1980, p. 41). In the 1960's research was conducted on adult learning. The findings of these studies supported the practices of the intuitive teachers. "Theorists began fitting the knowledge drawn from both sources into a comprehensive, coherent theory of adult learning" (p. 42). A comparison of theories of adult and child learning revealed that the two paralleled each other. To discuss the parallels, a parallel term was needed for pedagogy. Adult educators, "...coined the label 'andragogy,' which was based on the Greek word aner (with the andr-), meaning 'man, not boy' or adult" (p. 42).

Knowles suggested four categories to illustrate the parallel between andragogy and pedagogy: self-concept and teachers' concepts of learners, the role of experience, readiness to learn, and orientation to learning (1970, 1980).

1. Self-concept and Teachers' Concepts of Learners - Children are dependent on adults for their self-concept as learners. What they learn, the sequence of their learning activities, and the way in which they learn are directed by adults. Ingalls and Arceri (1972) contended that when adults are educated with pedagogical practices they "...tend to come into educational or training programs expecting to be treated like children and prepared to allow the teacher to take responsibility for their learning" (pp. 5-6).

But, adults are self-directed and autonomous learners. They are not passive vessels waiting to be filled with a teacher's storehouse of information. Adults come to the learning situation wanting to take responsibility for what they learn and how they go about the learning process.

2. The Role of Experience - Children's experiences are limited. They have not developed a pattern for interacting with the learning setting. "To children, experience is something that happens to them; it is an external event that affects them, not an integral part of them" (Knowles, 1980, p. 50). Adults' experiences are varied. In a sense, adults are products of their experience. "Because adults define themselves largely by their experiences, they have a deep investment in its value" (1980, p. 50). Thus, the experience that adults bring to the educational setting should be an ally with the professor. It is not full a slate that must be wiped clean in order to fill it with the instructor's new and better information.

3. Readiness to Learn - Both a child's and an adult's readiness to learn is contingent on prior acquisition of knowledge and skills through a set of developmental tasks. "But whereas the developmental tasks of youth tend to be products primarily of physiological and mental maturation, those of the adult years are the products primarily of the evolution of social roles" (Knowles,

1980, p. 51). Children's learning readiness results, largely, from external influences. "The main task of pedagogical curriculum development lies in dealing with interrelating of subjects and skill-building activities" (Ingalls and Arceri, 1972, p. 7).

But with adults, readiness to learn derives largely from internal influences. Adults play social roles that give meaning to learning. These roles provide a framework for learning. It is this framework that makes the adult's readiness to learn so different from that of the child.

4. Orientation to Learning - Children and adults have different time perspectives for learning. Children's education is focused on preparing them for the future. How often have we sat in classrooms and heard, "Someday you will need to know this"? Adults approach the learning setting with a need to apply the information. A streak of pragmatism pervades the adult learner in a way that is impossible for the child. Even the most erudite scholars have backgrounds that enable them to see the relationship between new knowledge and the old. Thus, the applicative need of the adult learner is a way to bridge the aquisition of new knowledge with the experience gained through years of study and living.

In summary, andragogy and pedagogy proceed from different assumptions about the nature of the learner. Kidd (1973) contended that the need to distinguish between andragogy and pedagogy is due in large part to the vastly different learning needs and motivations of the two types of learners. Knowles drew this distinction even more sharply. "Andragogy is based upon the insight that the deepest need an adult has is to be treated as an adult, to be treated as a self-directing person, to be treated with respect. Andragogy is student-centered and problem oriented (1970, p. 36).

Graduate Education for Professional Practice

Nowhere is the need for an andragogy-based approach to education more critical than in advanced levels of education for practicing professionals. Most students pursuing such degrees, are already knowledgeable about their fields. They have a great deal of first-hand experience. They are aware, at least in part, of their own strengths and weaknesses as practicing professionals. They see value to the acquisition of new knowledge. They are motivated to improve their own performance.

Programs for the preparation of school administrators provide instructive examples. With few exceptions, these programs are structured around a set of traditional values that permeates higher education. At the doctoral level, for instance, residency, the research dissertation, and the passing of paper and pencil tests typify the usual approach. It is possible, in many institutions, to acquire a doctorate in educational administration without

setting foot in a school. This is an unconscionable condition for an applied field.

Further,course content does not reflect backgrounds nor experiences brought to the classroom. Achilles pointed out that, "One is likely to find beginning students in advanced classes, or advanced students in beginning classes....Program content...[is] not clearly differentiated" (1988, p. 4).

Along with education in general, educational administration, too, has been under attack. Recommendations have been forwarded by blue-ribbon commissions. State legislatures have mandated new standards for preparation programs. Professional associations have developed offerings to improve practitioners' competencies. All too often,however, the new is not really new. It is tinkering with the old.

Recommendations emanating from the work of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration are illustrative. The recommendations are welcome and overdue, and they are eminently sound for the novice administrator. But, they are not appropriate for the experienced administrator.

> Involvement in Supervised Practice - The students would start this clinical experience almost from the first day of graduate study. Starting with observations of school board meetings and administrators in action, the student would move through a series of short, special-purpose internships with a master administrator. Through these experiences, the student would develop a feel for administration and would start to acquire the background that will enable him or her to solve future problems (Griffiths, Stout, and Forsyth, 1988, p. 297).
>
> The Demonstration of Competence - The culminating experience would not be a research thesis, which is usually required. Rather, it would be a demonstration that the student has really learned something about performing as an administrator, which could be demonstrated by the student formulating a large computer simulation, partaking in a field test, or handling a large case. The student should also be required to do a field study either individually or in a group (pp. 297-298).

Individual universities have taken steps to correct inadequacies in programs. These efforts are salutatory. But, most fail to address critical needs of the adult learner. Rather, they fall into two general categories of change. One is "...alterations in course taking..."(Bryant, 1988-89, p. 74). The other is "...keep the core content somewhat as it is and change the nature of the delivery system" (p. 74).

Changes at two universities illustrate Bryant's observation. At one state university, "...a lock-step sequence of fifty-four semester hours of study was established" (Ross, 1988, p. 6). This

sequence replaced the traditional program of residency. A respected private university is piloting a new type of residency program during the next three years (Sage and Blumberg, 1988). This program requires students, in order to meet the residency requirement, to attend seminars "...one full day each month of the school year, with a two-day culminating meeting in May"(p. 4). During this period of "residency" each student is required to prepare a report in the format for an article which might appear in a practitioner's journal in addition to written assignments throughout the year.

These attempts at reform, as laudable as they are, still approach the design of educational experiences for adults from a piece-meal, pedagogical perspective. What is needed is a fresh approach which recognizes that adults have different learning needs from those of children. In recognizing those needs, the programs, by definition, will be vastly different from those being offered in most institutions of higher education.

Meeting the Needs of Veteran Administrators

In a national survey published in The Executive Educator, 1,123 administrators answered questions about their programs of preparation. More than half of the respondents indicated that on-the-job-training was their most valuable training source. Fifty-one percent rated their training in management, curriculum and instruction, education research, school law, community relations, supervision, and finance as fair or poor. Their greatest criticism was the impracticality of the subject matter and the lack of professors' familiarity with the world of educational administrators (Heller, Conway, and Jacobson, 1988).

Administrators' lives are consumed with people who look to them for answers and direction. Their readiness for learning is based on real-time issues. But, the knowledge and experience gained in their preparation programs, according to perceptions reported in the survey, are not applicable to their lives and their settings. Perhaps, experienced administrators' needs are not addressed by traditional preparation programs because they are just that--preparation programs. The programs have been designed to prepare individuals to be administrators rather than honing the skills and insights acquired through years of experience.

The National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders

In 1972, Nova University established an innovative program designed to recognize that adult learners require a different approach to learning. The student body was restricted to incumbent administrators who had already earned their Masters degrees and who held appropriate credentials for their positions. Classes were held a locations convenient to students' homes, and research

requirements focused on solving problems faced by administrators in their own professional settings.

At the outset, the program attracted much publicity. Traditionalists viewed it as a "diploma-mill" way in which to earn a doctorate. Students, however, responded to a program that recognized their special situations. They responded by enrolling and pursuing a rigorous course of study that resulted in some tangible benefit to them as practicing professionals. That the program did meet this need is evidenced by the fact that the American Association of School Administrators named the program as the recipient of its "Outstanding Administrator Preparation Program" award in 1982.

The program is built around three substantive components. The first is the knowledge base. Each "Study Area" (course) is provided, at specific sites around the country, over a three- month period. Professors meet for full-days of instruction, on Saturdays, once each month. Three different professors, each a leading figure in his/her own area of expertise, provide the instruction for each study area. At the completion of the study area, an examination is administered. The examination requires application of study area content to the participant's work setting. Each participant in the program must pass each of the eight study areas offered.

Second, the research requirement is fulfilled by completing a practicum and a Major Applied Research Project (MARP). A practicum is defined as a problem solving intervention in a school setting. Each participant is required to identify a problem he/she faces in the school setting, document the existence of the problem with data, design a solution strategy, support the efficacy of the strategy with research base, implement the strategy, and evaluate the results. The results of the intervention must be written in research report format and approved by faculty. The MARP is an extension of the practicum in that it requires more scope and depth, and the intervention must be planned and implemented for a longer period of time. In many ways, this component is the "heart" of the program. It brings an inquiry-based orientation to administrator preparation. It requires attention to heuristic problems, "...through an iterative process. One looks; one tries to see without bias; one tries to understand; one attempts to develop generalizable statements" (Bryant, 1988-89, p.76). The program is careful to point out that the ability to generalize is limited to the setting in which the research is conducted. The impact on the setting, however, is important.

Third, each summer the university sponsors a "Summer Institute" in one of several locations in the nation. At the institute, an issue of national importance is addressed by inviting distinguished figures to speak to and work with participants for a one week period of time. Accordingly, the ambiance of the institute is a unique combination of summer school and convention. The institute is a device to help participants build a network of colleagues

around the country. And, by focusing on educational issues of national scope, it helps break the boundaries of provincialism that tend to constrain our thinking.

All of this is provided to a cadre of people who meet together for the three years of their program as a "Cluster". People meet as sub-clusters to study, to share perspectives on the topic under discussion, and to support each other in their efforts. Thus, the program engenders a cooperative, rather than competitive attitude toward learning. And, adults are recognized as active partners in learning rather than passive recipients of information.

Finally, the program makes a wide array of informational resources available. More than 350 electronic data bases are at the disposal of every participant. In addition to a cluster library and the guaranteed access to locally based library resources, the program is liberated from the confines of a single campus.

Knowles' four categories of andragogy are evident in the program:

1. Self-Concept and Teachers' Concepts of Learners - Students in the program are called participants. The term suggests that they are self-directed individuals who are able and willing to take responsibility for their own learning. They are actively involved in the learning process. "Teachers" are facilitators. They are catalysts for, rather than directors of,learning. Communication is multi-directional rather than one-way. Clusters are communities of learners and teachers.

2. The Role of Experience - All participants are practicing administrators. Their experience forms a valued knowledge base that can inform both other participants and the instructor. Rather than denigrate that experience as an impediment to learning, it is used as a base upon which new insights can be developed and new learning can build.

3. Readiness to Learn - Their administrative roles require participants to engage in learning. Through these roles, they create their own meanings for knowledge. They decide the usefulness of knowledge and set the course of assimilation within the demands of their own responsibilities.

4. Orientation to Learning - In the program, learning is problem oriented and site specific. Participants' engaged time, the time and energy spent synthesizing old and new knowledge and applying it to their respective settings, is considered more valuable than the time spent in class.

Conclusion

The program still thrives after 18 years. Its graduates hold positions of prominence throughout the country; superintendents of schools in major school districts, leadership positions in state

departments of education, leadership roles in professional associations, professorships, and a wide array of positions in local school districts. It has survived and grown, despite criticism from colleagues in tradition-bound programs because it recognizes in a fundamental, systemic way, that adults can learn best when andragogy, not pedagogy, drives the structure of the learning process.

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